



G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center

*to care for him who shall have borne the battle and his widow, and orphan*

# FOCUSED ON YOU

AUGUST 2019

## VIETNAM BLUE WATER NAVY VETERANS

### *Disability benefits available to those serving offshore*

#### Agent Orange Exposure in the Republic of Vietnam Waters (Blue Water Navy)

The law states that Veterans aboard a vessel operating not more than 12 nautical miles seaward from the demarcation line of the waters of Vietnam and Cambodia as defined in Public Law 116-23, between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides such as Agent Orange and may be entitled to service connection for conditions related to that exposure.

Blue Water Navy Veterans are now entitled to a presumption of service connection for conditions related to Agent Orange exposure. This extension of the presumption is a result of Public Law 116-23, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, signed into law on June 25, 2019. The law takes effect January 1, 2020.

To be entitled to disability compensation benefits, these Veterans must have one or more of the conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure that are listed in 38 Code of Federal Regulations section 3.309(e).

#### What conditions are related to Agent Orange exposure?

Agent Orange presumptive conditions are:

- AL amyloidosis
- Chloracne, or other acneform disease consistent with chloracne
- Chronic B-cell leukemias
- Diabetes mellitus, Type 2
- Ischemic heart disease
- Hodgkin lymphoma, formerly known as Hodgkin's disease
- Non-Hodgkin lymphoma
- Multiple myeloma
- Parkinson's disease
- Peripheral neuropathy, early-onset
- Porphyria cutanea tarda
- Prostate cancer
- Respiratory cancers (lung, bronchus, larynx or trachea)
- Soft-tissue sarcoma (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma).

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### *Disability benefits available to those serving offshore (continued)*

How do I file a claim for disability compensation?

- Apply online using [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov), OR
- Work with an accredited representative or agent, OR
- Go to a VA regional office and have a VA employee assist you. You can find your regional office on our Facility Locator page.
- State on your application that you are filing for one of the presumed Agent Orange conditions.
- Include any evidence you have of service in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the required timeframe. Include the name(s) of the ship(s) and the date(s) you crossed within 12 nautical miles of the Republic of Vietnam, if you have that information.
- Provide medical evidence showing a diagnosis of a current Agent Orange presumptive condition or tell us where you are being treated.

For more information on how to apply and for tips on making sure your claim is ready to be processed by VA, visit our Disability Compensation web page. [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

## PREVENTS

### The President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide

[Executive Order \(EO\) 13861](#), the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) was signed March 5, 2019. VA is pleased that this EO effort is led by an inter-agency Cabinet-level Task Force and Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen as the Executive Director. The goal of the Task Force is to create a Roadmap that will reduce suicide by empowering Veterans to pursue an improved quality of life, prioritizing research, and establishing collaboration across the public and private sectors.

The Roadmap will utilize a public health approach with the goal of changing the culture of how Veteran suicide is approached, discussed and prevented. It will be a comprehensive plan building on existing efforts from each agency and office that is represented on the Task Force. It also intends to reach out across all communities collaborating under this EO.

As part of EO 13861, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Department of Veterans Affairs are leading the development of a National Research Strategy to improve the coordination, monitoring, benchmarking, and execution of public- and private-sector research related to the factors that contribute to veteran suicide. They have released a [Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) to help guide the National Research Strategy.

Through this RFI, they seek input on ways to increase knowledge about factors influencing suicidal behaviors and ways to prevent suicide; inform the development of a robust and forward-looking research agenda; coordinate relevant research efforts across the Nation; and measure progress on these efforts. They also seek to involve the Nation's full research and development ecosystem, and collaborate with state, local, territorial, and tribal governments, as well as community members, industry, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions to ensure that Veterans have access to effective suicide prevention services. The collective efforts begin with the common understanding that suicide is preventable, and that prevention requires ongoing support prior to, and beyond, intervention at the point of crisis. To end Veteran suicide, we must develop a holistic understanding of the underlying factors that determine the overall health and well-being of our Nation's Veterans.

## Veterans — Talk with Your Health Care Team About Low Blood Sugars

If you are a Veteran with diabetes, you probably hear a lot about lowering your blood sugar. But diabetes can be difficult to manage. Sometimes your blood sugar can go *too* low. This can even be as serious as having high blood sugar. So what is the best way to be sure your blood sugar stays at a safe level? It may surprise you to learn that simply talking about it with your health care team is the best first step.

Things have changed since the days when patients were expected to just listen to their doctor without asking questions. In fact, your health care team *wants* you to be a part of decisions to keep you healthy. They are even learning better ways to ask for your input. But they need your help. Let your care team know about any worries you have. Talk about the problems that make managing diabetes difficult for you, especially if you sometimes have low blood sugar.



### Key points to remember:

- Talk with your health care team—they want to know your preferences and concerns! It will help them suggest ways to treat your diabetes that will work for *you*.
- Ask them about the signs of low blood sugar and how to treat it quickly.
- Talk about low blood sugar if you sometimes have it.
- Ask about ways to take care of your diabetes that may bring less risk of low blood sugar.
- Medical terms and instructions can be complex and hard to understand. Tell your care team if they have not explained something clearly.
- It can be hard to remember all your concerns when you get into an appointment. So before your next appointment, make a list of questions to ask your provider. Let them know which are the most important to you.
- Only *you* know what works best for your life. Discuss the parts of your diabetes treatment that are working and what may not be working as well.

For more information, please visit [www.prevention.va.gov](http://www.prevention.va.gov).

The G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center hosted the **Veterans Portrait Project (VPP)** with Stacy Pearsall and her service dog, Charlie, on July 27, 2019.

Stacy, a combat-wounded OIF Veteran and Bronze Star recipient, began the VPP as she recovered from combat injuries sustained in Iraq. Jackson, Mississippi was the 41<sup>st</sup> stop on Stacy's *Mission Complete Tour*, where Stacy photographed more than a dozen Veterans. Public Affairs Officer Susan Varcie learned of the VPP on Facebook and reached out to Stacy to bring the project to Mississippi, one of the states she had not been to yet. You can view the photos on our [Facebook page](#).



*Photo: (Left to right) Stacy L. Pearsall (USAF SSgt. Retired) and her service dog, Charlie, photographing Army Veteran Suzy Davis, during the Veterans Portrait Project. Photo credit Veterans Portrait Project.*

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